Saskatchewan
Parks and
Renewable
Resources

Hon. Colin Maxwell
Minister

Parks Branch

Candle Lake Provincial Park

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CANDLE LAKE PROVINCIAL

RECREATION PARK

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Background

Candle Lake Provincial Park was established in 1986 by reclassifying three of the four areas comprising the Candle Lake Recreation Site (Minowukaw Beach, Sandy Bay and Fisher Creek). The fourth area, Waskateena Beach, retains its Recreation Site status. Minowukaw Beach was established in 1959 as a public campground and day-use area. The Sandy Bay campground and day-use area was developed in 1964 and the Fisher Creek site was developed in 1973.

Although access from larger centers such as Saskatoon and Prince Albert was neither direct nor paved in the 1950's or 60's, the area began to receive increased visitation for camping, fishing and other day-use activities. The 1970's saw continued private development and ever increasing use of the public recreation sites. Improved accessibility created by the upgrading and surfacing of Highway 120, electrification of the area, restrictions on development of competing lakes (Emma, Christopher, Anglin, Waskesiu) and a greater public awareness of the high quality recreational resources of Candle Lake combined to bring about pressures on public facilities at Candle Lake.

By 1974 the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources had undertaken investigation of the resource base and evaluated the impacts of existing and anticipated future use and demands on these resources. Nearly 40 square miles on the north and east sides of the lake was considered for inclusion in a Provincial Park.

The current Park area includes the Minowukaw Beach unit on the southeast end of the Lake and the Sandy Bay/Fisher Creek unit on the southwest side. To protect the option of including some additional areas in the future, certain additional lands along the lake have been excluded from forest harvesting and will be designated as Park Land Reserve in the future. Decisions respecting such 'reserved' lands will be made at some time in the future when alternative uses, environmental considerations, future needs and other relevant factors have been thoroughly considered.

Recreation use of the Candle Lake area has continued to increase in all seasons. Fishing in late winter and spring, winter snowmobiling and cross-country skiing, camping, boating, fishing and day-use in summer, hunting in the fall and year-round use of cottages and private commercial resorts has become common. Candle Lake Provincial Park now receives the 6th highest level of visitation and the 7th highest camping use of all park lands in the Province.

Park Classification and Purpose

Provincial Parks are usually large areas of land and water where the high quality of the natural resources combine to make the area provincially significant. The Parks are dedicated to the people of Saskatchewan and visitors for their enjoyment and the cultural, educational and social benefits that may be derived from them for this and future generations.

One of the major provisions of The Parks Act is to identify a classification of Provincial Parks. Four classes of Provincial Parks are now identified: Wilderness Parks; Natural Environment Parks; Recreation Parks and Historic Parks.

As a Recreation Park, Candle Lake will be developed and used in a manner distinctly different from the other three classes of Provincial Parks. The primary purpose will be to provide high quality recreational opportunities in the region. Candle Lake Provincial Recreation Park will utilize its resources to encourage the widest possible segment of the public to come to the Park and to experience and enjoy the out-of-doors in both summer and winter.

The Park provides public access to the lake, protects representative natural features of the Wapawekka Uplands, contains interesting features such as the Minowukaw Beach sand dunes and provides public facilities and services to complement nearby private commercial resorts, cottage subdivisions and the Candle Lake Resort Village.

Location

Candle Lake is situated in Townships 55, 56, and 57, Ranges 22 and 23, West of the Second Meridian (53 50 North Latitude and 105 20 West Longitude). Provincial Highway #120 is the main artery serving the area. An extensive network of forest harvesting roads and trails provide access to the lake along the west. They are used by the public for extensive recreation including hunting and use by motorized recreational vehicles.

Prince Albert is located approximately 60 km southwest and Saskatoon is located approximately 200 km southwest. Cottagers, weekend visitors, hunters and fishermen from Prince Albert and Saskatoon are common.

Units of the Park

The Minowukaw Beach area, forming the eastern block of the Park, is approximately 621 hectares (1,535 acres). The Sandy Bay/Fisher Creek area, forming the western portion of the Park is slightly smaller at approximately 593 hectares (1,465 acres). The total area is 1,214 hectares (3,000 acres).

The Minowukaw Beach unit, with over 6 km of shoreline, contains come of the best bathing beaches on the lake as well as characteristic vegetation communities and sensitive sand dune backshore areas. Higher, better drained forested areas in sections 26 and 27 to the north of the Minowukaw subdivision will be useful for more extensive recreational activities. Highway 120 forms the eastern boundary of this unit.

The Sandy Bay/Fisher Creek unit has the two former recreation sites within its core. Approximately 3.8 km of lakeshore are within this unit. While the backshore immediately behind the main beach is unsuitable for recreational activities due to its high water table and poor drainage, attractive forested areas are located nearby, immediately to the north and to the south. The campground and day-use facilities are located in the northern portion.

The Fisher Creek area has received heavy use in the past, by anglers, and serves as a small day-use area and overflow campground for the Sandy Bay campground. The area contains some interesting historical/archaeological features worthy of interpretation within the Park. For example, in 1887-88, a winter outpost of the Hudson Bay Company Post at Fort a-la-Corne was established near the confluence of Fisher Creek and Candle Lake. In addition, test evidence indicates long time habitation and use of the Fisher Creek area. Surveys in 1975 resulted in the collection of a number of materials including projectile points, scraping tools, cutting tools, flakes and bone.

Natural Features

Candle Lake Provincial Park is located in the Wapawekka Uplands Natural Region of Saskatchewan. The large lake with its exceptional sand beaches, topography and natural vegetation, aquatic and wildlife resources all combine to create outstanding recreational opportunities.

The surface deposits of the Candle Lake area are the products of glaciation and related processes. They vary from 90 metres to 180 metres in thickness above the bedrock surface. The Wapawekka Hills Upland is a rolling till plain with elevations ranging from 488 metres to 595 metres (1,600 to 1,950 feet) above sea level.

The terrain around Candle Lake shows slight general relief; a rolling topography with light undulations. The western side of the lake is predominantly level with depressions and extensive muskeg areas. The eastern shoreland is higher and more steeply sloping, rising up to a maximum 55 metres above the lake level. Drainage around the lake is generally not well developed and considerable runoff is held in large muskegs and low-lying areas.

Candle Lake is the fourth largest lake in southern Saskatchewan, with a total surface area of approximately 12, 950 hectares (50 square miles or 32,000 acres) and a total shoreline length of approximately 71 km (44.2 miles). Water quality is rated relatively high due to its usual clarity and lack of algae.

Because Candle Lake is fed by many springs and streams, and has only the Torch River as a major outlet at its southeast corner, the lake's level is usually raised during wet seasons, (resulting in occasional flooding problems). A control structure on the Torch River restricts flow from the Lake during dry periods to help maintain lake levels.

The lake is moderately shallow with a maximum depth of 16.8 metres (55 feet) and a mean depth of 8.1 metres (26.6 feet). Slightly under half of the shoreline is sand. Ten major natural sandy beaches, from 300 m to nearly 2,000 m in length, are present. Most of these beaches have very high outdoor recreation potential. Three beaches are rated Class 1 by the Canada Land Inventory, and very little of the entire Candle Lake shoreland is rated lower than Class 3.

Natural vegetation around the lake reflects the transition between mixed-wood forest and northern coniferous forest. Vegetation on the upland soils include trembling aspen, white spruce, jack pine, white birch, balsam fir with alder, hazelnut and willows. Vegetation in muskegs and poorly drained soils include black spruce, tamarack, balsam poplar, white spruce, water (swamp) birch with labrador tea, sedges and sphagnum moss.

Although sixteen species of fish are found in Candle Lake, including Lake Sturgeon, Lake Chub, Cisco and Trout-perch, the dominant sport fish species are Northern Pike and Walleye. Other significant larger species include Lake Whitefish, Tullabee and White Suckers. The most numerous of the smaller species are Yellow Perch, White Sucker fingerlings, Emerald and Spottail Shiners. Candle Lake has supported both commercial and sport fisheries in the past.

Overfishing was considered responsible for reduced fish populations in the 1970's; but restrictions on fishing activities in the Fisher Creek area (important for spawning) has increased fish populations in recent years. An artificial pond in the Sandy Bay area of the Park has been stocked with Rainbow Trout.

Wildlife in the area is characterized by an abundant and diverse bird population because of the numerous productive nesting and breeding sites around the lake. Migratory birds are also prevalent during the spring and fall migration periods. Spruce and ruffed grouse are common. Eagles, osprey and colonial nesting birds are also frequent visitors.

Moose, white-tailed and mule deer, black bear, woodland caribou and elk are found in the area as well as a variety of smaller mammals including red fox, coyote, gray wolf, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and smaller rodents.

Available Facilities

Minowukaw Beach serves as both a day-use and camping area. There is 750 metres of beach with buoyed swimming area and an unserviced changehouse. Toilets, water supply, boat launch and docks are provided. Fish cleaning tables and shelters are available for anglers. A picnic shelter, small playground and limited parking are available to day-users. The camping area consists of 76 non-electrified sites and an overflow area (20 sites). A waste disposal site for recreational vehicles and trailers is provided. Areas for group camping, as well as trails for snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are located nearby.

The Sandy Bay/Fisher Creek area has facilities similar to Minowukaw Beach, however the level of services is somewhat higher with 8 flush toilets, a campground service center, laundry, street lighting, 76 electrified campsites, 61 non-electrified campsites and 20 overflow sites. Day-use facilities include picnic benches, tables, barbecue stands, garbage cans, water supply, buoyed swimming area and playground. A boat launch, docks and fish cleaning shelter are available for anglers and boaters.

Resource Use and Trends

The natural resources around Candle Lake are in demand for a varity of public and private uses. Some concerns and potential conflicts have been identified relating to the future use and protection of these resources. As renewable resources, the lake, the forests, the fish and wildlife all require controlled use and careful management in order to sustain them. At the present time, resource uses in the area include commercial fishing, angling, hunting, trapping, forest harvesting and gravel extraction. Sensitive environments must be dealt with when considering the appropriateness and levels of recreation use.

Some shorelines receive very high levels of public use during peak periods. Trends towards increasing public use of the lake suggest a need for improved public recreation facilities at alternative beaches where the resource base can better support additional use. Some of the longest and widest beaches capable of supporting greater public use are located within the Provincial Park. The longest Class 1 beach with the best potential for future public use and development remains within the Park Reserve Area on the northeast side of Candle Lake.

Forestry operations are important in the Candle Lake region. The Provincial Forestry Branch have timber management and silviculture sample plots throughout the forest area.

The Candle Lake area is within the Prince Albert Pulp Company (PAPCO) Licence Area. Much of the area to the west of Candle Lake has been cut over and forest operations are still present. The eastern and northern areas which were identified as a desirable Natural Area will be of special interest in the future when forestry operations shift to the east side of the lake. The area within the Proposed Park Reserve have been formally excluded from PAPCO's Forest Management Licence Area. Designation of a Park Land Reserve on the north east side of Candle Lake will enable optimum resource use evaluation and management guidelines.

Benefits of a Provincial Park

Development of the Candle Lake Provincial Recreation Park would ensure that suitable representative portions of the Candle Lake natural environment, particularly its shoreline features, would be protected for future public use and enjoyment. Extensive forms of recreation can be pursued within the Park and outside the core areas which will be developed for day-use and camping.

Development and maintenance of support facilities would protect the natural resource base and guard against misuse of the more sensitive areas such as the Minowukaw Beach sand dunes.

Interpretation of the Candle Lake environment, including the native flora and fauna, as well as geologic, historic and cultural features within the Park and elsewhere in the Candle Lake region, would add to the visitors' appreciation and understanding of the Park. While the high quality sand beaches, aesthetics and shelter of the forest, wildlife and fish will continue to attract visitors to the area, interpretive facilities, developed trails and markers and public communication of resource management strategies will add significantly to the quality of their experience.

Establishment of a Provincial Park will serve to further increase the area's ability to attract visitors, particularly when accompanied by a higher level of programming, services and recreation facilities.

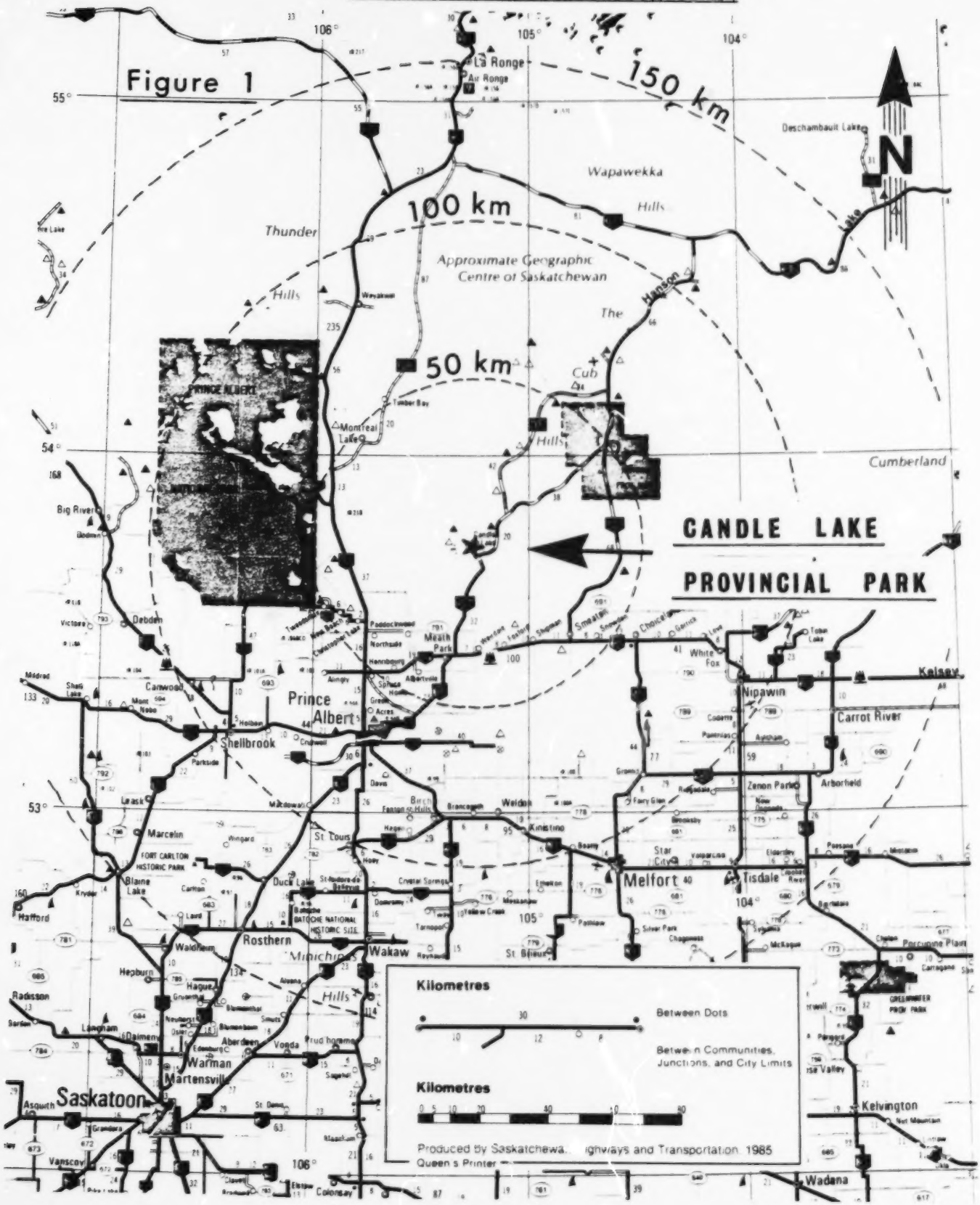
The inability of other lakes in the region (Emma, Christopher, Anglin, Waskesiu) to absorb further increases in use will add to the outdoor recreation pressures at Candle Lake. The creation of the Provincial Park should benefit the entire population of central Saskatchewan. Accessibility to Candle Lake will be ensured to the public for all forms of aquatic activities.

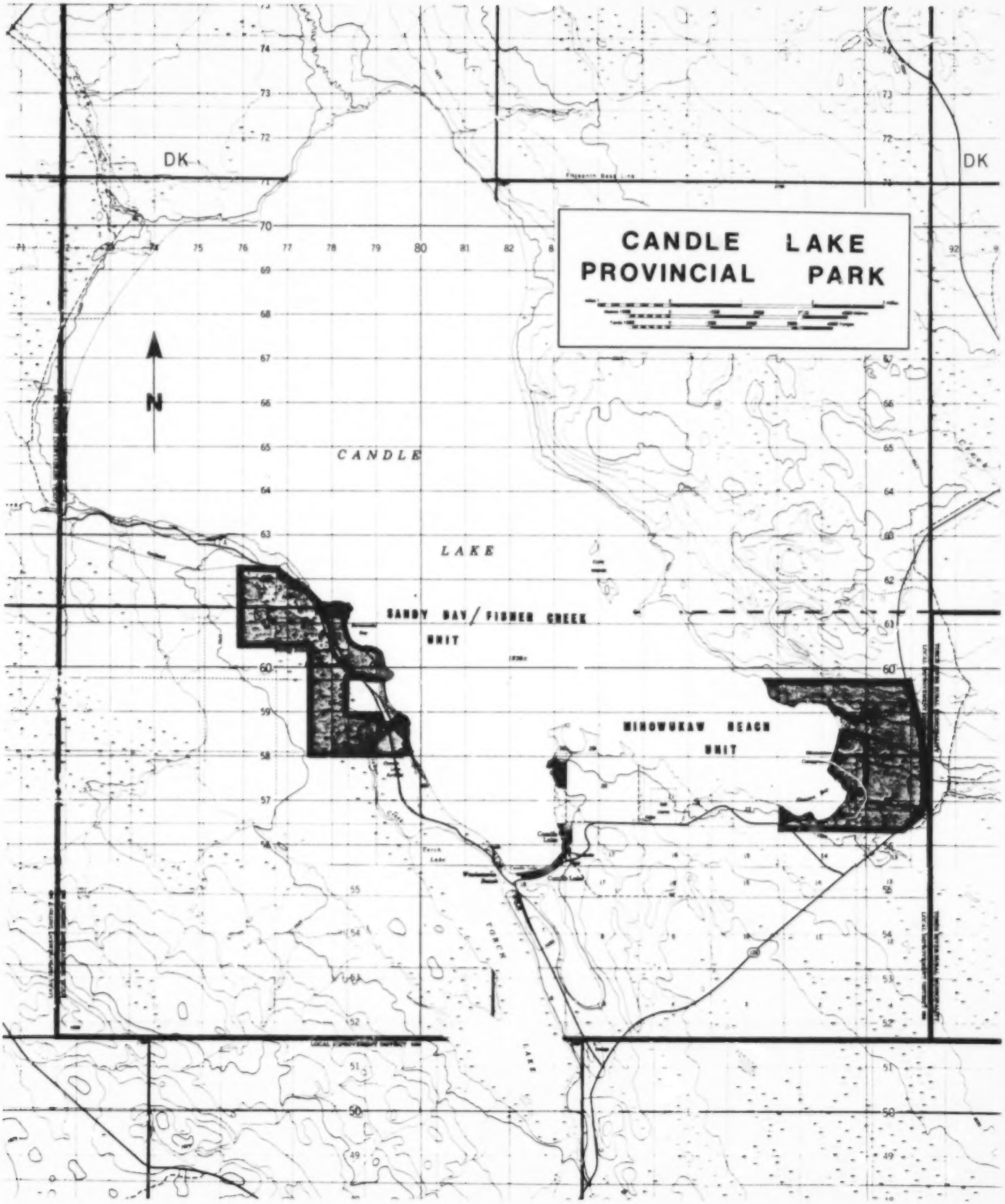
The Park should become an important site for tourists who are passing through the Prince Albert region, either on their way north towards the Prince Albert National Park, the Lac La Ronge Provincial Park or the Churchill River, or northeast towards the Hanson Lake Road, Nipawin Provincial Park or other areas.

Public and private facilities at Candle Lake, within the Resort Village and within the new Provincial Park, can serve the recreational needs of other less developed areas to the north and east, including Nipawin Natural Environment Provincial Park and smaller lakes such as Piprell, East Trout-Nipekamew and Whiteswan. The complementary and support role of Candle Lake Provincial Park for tourism and recreation in the region is expected to grow considerably in the future.

Although the Park will not necessarily be considered a major tourist destination area, the improvements and promotion associated with its Provincial Park status will benefit the economy of the entire Candle Lake region.

Regional Perspective [Figure 1]




CANDLE LAKE
PROVINCIAL PARK
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SANDY BAY / FISHER CREEK
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